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The Dirt

News and Notes from FNS's Office of Community Food Systems

Celebrate Summer & Plan Ahead



Photo credit: Project Bread / Kids loved the watermelon at a new farmers market site in Greenfield, MA

As the days grow cooler, and children across the country head back to school, we want to send a huge thank you and congratulations to summer sponsors and their partners who kept kids healthy, nourished, and active all summer long.

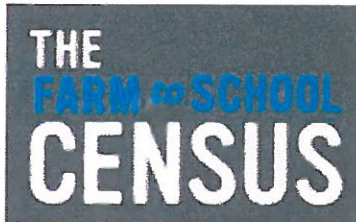
This summer, we received a variety of stories: urban, rural, large, and small programs that were serving delicious local foods, providing fun, hands-on activities, and engaging the whole family in developing healthy habits.

As our attention turns to the new school year remember: it's never too early to start planning for summer! Here are some resources to keep on hand as you think about summer 2017:

- FRAC's Fresh From the Farm Guide
- USDA's Summer Meals Toolkit, with farm to summer tips for state agencies, and sponsors, and those interested in opening new sites at farmers markets

Find all of these, and more, on our farm to summer website.

[Learn more >](#)



Farm to School Census Webinar Recording Now Available

The recording and presentation slides are now available from the recent Farm to School Census webinar. In August, FNS's Office of Community Food Systems and the National Farm to School Network hosted a webinar providing an in-depth review of the 2015 USDA Farm to School Census. Presenters summarized the Farm to School Census website and described ways the Census data can be used at the local, state, and national levels in support of farm to school efforts.

[Click here to watch >](#)

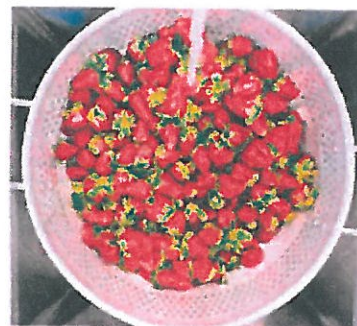
Wheres the Beef? Giles County, VA

This year, Giles County, Virginia featured local beef in their homemade chili, hot dogs, and meat sauce in the summer meals program! Collaborating with the district's Agricultural Land Lab, the summer meals program supervisor, Christy Lawson, was happy to use over 500 lbs of student raised beef in over 4,000 meals. Student-grown vegetables have been on the menu for a few years now, and Ag Lab manager, Ben Woods, saw an opportunity to process one of the cattle at a USDA inspected facility, and included his students in the process. The beef received rave reviews from students and the pilot has been so popular that there are plans to increase the amount of beef to 3,000 lbs for next year.

Thanks, Giles County for sharing how local meat works in summer meals!

Don't want summer to end?

Summer's harvest can be served in cafeterias all year long! Many schools want to serve local produce throughout the year, but find it challenging in the winter months when little is harvested. You can celebrate National Food Safety Education Month by learning how to safely preserve the local harvest so that it is available year-round. The Office of Food Safety offers a comprehensive guide to freezing fruits and vegetables. When it is freezing outside, frozen produce is a great way to continue bringing the farm to the school!



[Read more >](#)